

Culinary program feeds workforce pipeline

By JENNIFER GLOSE
jenniferg@lvb.com

When Culinary Institute of America graduate Duncan Howden was hired 20 years ago by Northampton Community College as the director of culinary arts, he was faced with the task of creating a well-rounded and affordable program from the ground up.

What the now-retired Howden came up with was a 45-week, one-year culinary arts diploma curriculum, modeled after the very school where he was trained, but without the hefty price tag.

And thanks to Howden, NCC today sends nearly 50 aspiring chefs annually into the workforce of the Greater Lehigh Valley, including at Sands Casino Resort in Bethlehem and Sodexo in Lower Macungie Township. And at least one of the program's graduates has gained national television exposure, while others relish in the success of their own business or in a growing career.

"I think it's a great foundation that is based on the CIA program, without the CIA expense," said Susan Roth, associate professor and program coordinator for NCC's culinary arts program since 2003.

Every six months, a new group of students joins the program, and every six months a class graduates. On Aug. 21, another 22 students will walk away from NCC's graduation ceremonies with a culinary arts diploma.

"I feel more prepared and have less butterflies," said Natalie Zurn, who will graduate in August. "And I am ready to produce."



PHOTO/JENNIFER GLOSE

Alan Pitotti, 1995 graduate of Northampton Community College's culinary arts program, in 2008 opened Dolce Patisserie in Hellertown. In 2012, he won \$10,000 on Food Network's Sweet Genius, a confectionery and pastry competition show.

CLASSROOM TO TABLE

The first half of the curriculum is in a classroom setting, where students learn culinary arts theory.

After that, students leave behind the classroom and transition into the college's on-site restaurant, Hampton Winds. At the restaurant, students must prepare and cook a full menu of items for members of the community who on weekdays pay to dine for lunch and dinner.

"I think this program is a tremendous asset for the entire Lehigh Valley," said Bethlehem

Mayor Robert Donchez, who dines at the Hampton Winds. "The students do such an outstanding job, and culinary arts is a great occupation to learn and go into."

In addition to the dining area, the restaurant has a private banquet room for up to 150 people.

"The best part of the program is having the restaurant," said Kelly Stem, instructor of the program, pastry chef of Hampton Winds and a 2006 culinary arts graduate of NCC. "This industry is based around restaurants and it

[Hampton Winds] really sets the students up for what they get once they get out there after graduation."

Students are required to work in the restaurant six to seven hours per day, Monday-Friday.

"It's the idea of getting the hands-on experience," said John Hartzog, retired East Penn School District math teacher and a Hampton Winds customer since the 1990s. "The students get the chance to promote their product."

SWEET SUCCESS

One of the success stories from NCC's culinary arts program is 1995 graduate Alan Pitotti.

After realizing his passion for pastry cooking at NCC, Pitotti furthered his education at Culinary Institute of America in New York. He later was a pastry chef in various upscale restaurants, including Le Bec Fin in Philadelphia.

"The NCC program gave me good stepping stones and building blocks," Pitotti said. "And I was able to keep building on that."

Pitotti in 2008 fulfilled a lifelong dream and opened Dolce Patisserie in Hellertown, where he creates and sells handmade chocolates, pastries and confections.

"My favorite part about the NCC program was the instructors," Pitotti said. "They help you organize your future; they are great people and they touch on everything."

Hailing from Pen Argyl, Pitotti took his passion all the way to national television in 2012 when he won the \$10,000 grand prize on Food Network's Sweet Genius, a confectionery and pastry competition show.

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Leadership: Planting seeds for yourself, others

I recently attended the funeral of someone I've known for more than 30 years.

As long-time relationships sometimes unfold into different roles, we went from being acquaintances to friends, to client-vendor, to vendor-client and back to acquaintances.



Bonnie Sussman-Versace

Years went by when we only exchanged pleasantries at an annual fundraising event. Other years, we would have in-depth conversations about business,

family, community and life.

Regardless of what, where, when and why, I always learned something from the interaction. In fact, I've been quoting this person for many years. To me, this person's legacy of leadership didn't just happen after passing away.

Many times, leaders think their legacy starts when they retire, or at "the end of the day." I was one of those people.

Old school thinking says, "What do you want to be known for at the end of the day?" Or, with more finality, "What will they put on your tombstone?"

Quite frankly, who cares! By then, it's too late.

Leadership is a mindset that gives every human being the right to discover, grow, develop new skills, reinvent, innovate and then share his or her learnings with others. It's also a continual process of examination and rebirth.

Leadership development is never done. And the legacy that comes from our own leadership development is what plants the seeds of greatness in others.

WHAT WE PLANT WILL GROW

Sixty years ago, Earl Nightingale started

challenging people to think about the messages they were planting for themselves and others. His research found that the creation of great achievements started with the thoughts and messages we planted in our minds. The more positive and powerful the messages were, the greater the outcome and achievement.

In a segment from his famous story, "The Strangest Secret," Nightingale described how the human mind is much like a farmer's land.

If a farmer plants two seeds, one of corn and one of nightshade, a deadly poison, and he waters the seeds and takes care of the land, both

seeds needed to make a positive difference in our lives and the lives of others, the legacy of leadership will just happen. And the more seeds we sow, the more abundant the outcomes.

GETTING YOUR LEGACY IN MOTION

Here is a small packet of seeds to help you set your legacy of leadership in motion. Plant them in all of your "gardens" – family, friends, peers and employees.

• **Seed No. 1** – Be intimately and solidly connected to your values.

Your values are your identity, they stand for

When you engage the people around you, they will be more inclined to become enthused and inspired. And, when they engage the people around them, those people will also become more enthused and inspired, and so on. ...

This seed can be very fragile. Once planted, cover it with burlap so the wind doesn't blow the seed away, and the birds don't eat the seeds before they bloom.

• **Seed No. 4** – Believe in yourself.

Your confidence (not arrogance), will encourage others to be part of your team and help you build successful outcomes. It takes the "power of one" to put success in motion.

Start the motion. Pitch your stone into the water and watch the ripple effect that follows. The ripples seem to go on forever.

This seed grows into a flower similar to a sunflower. Imagine the flower as a human face beaming with pride.

As you plant seeds of greatness for yourself, sustain the effort by planting positive and powerful seeds in the minds of the people with whom you interact.

seeds will grow in abundance. Like our minds, the land doesn't care what is planted.

PLANT SEEDS OF GREATNESS

The human mind, however, is far more fertile, incredible and mysterious than the land. But it doesn't care what we plant – success or failure, a worthy goal or chaos; misunderstanding, fear and anxiety; or caring, integrity and cooperation. What we plant will be returned in abundance.

As you plant seeds of greatness for yourself, sustain the effort by planting positive and powerful seeds in the minds of the people with whom you interact.

Chances are, most people in leadership roles don't think about their legacy on a regular basis. If we consciously practice planting the

who you are as a person and guide your behaviors and attitudes throughout your life. Help others develop, articulate and practice their values.

The shape of these seeds may vary, but when tended carefully, they grow tall and strong with solid root systems and unshakable branches.

• **Seed No. 2** – Be accountable for your actions, or inactions.

When you take personal accountability for something you did, didn't do or did wrong, the level of trust from those around you will increase. By modeling accountability, others will be more open to accepting their part in a successful outcome or a failed activity.

This seed will take root in a short time and deliver a very consistent crop.

• **Seed No. 3** – Be engaged, enthused and inspired.

The planting of seeds is an ongoing process. Periodically, look back and take stock of the fruits of your labor. Most likely you'll find how much easier and more pleasant life has become.

Look for more packets of seeds to plant in your gardens; and at the end of each day, ask yourself, "What have I done to improve the quality of life for myself and those around me?"

The answer will make you feel like a million bucks!

A business leader and entrepreneur with more than 35 years of experience, Bonnie Sussman-Versace is co-founder and principal of Focused LLC in Wyomissing, which helps business leaders achieve cultural environments that foster improved quality of life and bottom-line performance. She can be reached at bversace@focusedllc.net.

TAKING STOCK: TIPS and interest rates – but buy blue chips, too

Dear Mr. Berko: I have a \$40,000 certificate of deposit coming due next month, and my wife wants to put the money in Treasury bonds that guarantee 3.3 percent. Our brokerage accounts are about 35 percent bonds, 50 percent stocks and 15 percent cash.



Malcolm Berko

The bank won't buy them for us, so I asked our local broker, who wants to charge us \$100 commission – though he would prefer that we put this money in Treasury inflation-protected securities instead

of in fixed-income Treasury securities. I told him that the \$100 commission was too high, and he got a little insulted but nicely told me that I could buy them directly through TreasuryDirect and avoid the costs.

I tried, and so did my wife, but we can't seem to negotiate the protocols. If I managed my dental practice as the government manages this site, I'd be flat broke in no time. We are not comfortable asking the broker to help us understand the site and hope you might have some suggestions for us.

— C.S., Columbus, Ohio

Dear C.S.: Tips, I've often told my children

and grandchildren, is an acronym I've used for more than 40 years that describes gratuities given to waiters. It means "to insure prompt service." But the U.S. government, in its frequent moments of clarity, chose to kidnap those four letters and gave them a new meaning: Treasury inflation-protected securities.

In the past few years, even though their principal at maturity is 100 percent assured by Washington, they've been among the worst-performing bonds in the market. The sovereign bonds of Spain, Greece and Turkey have done better than the TIPS index, which last year posted an 8.6 percent loss.

WORTH THE \$100

It would be un-American if I advised you not to purchase TIPS, but I will advise you not to use the TreasuryDirect website. Its home page has 35 laughing faces, and I couldn't figure out why they're laughing.

And after at least 11 minutes of mousing and clicking, I couldn't figure out how to buy TIPS on that government site, either. I suspect that the stupid who designed HealthCare.gov are the same stupid who designed this website.

I think your time is worth more than \$100, so stop bending over dollars to pick up dimes. Pay the \$100 fee to your broker, because the agita you'll get trying to work that website will

bean you bonkers.

Though I don't care a hoot for TIPS, your broker may be giving you good advice. Interest rates and inflation are going to rise, but I can't tell you "when." (Though when they do, I'm not comfortable that the lady at the Federal Reserve has the skill to moderate their rise.)

Higher rates will cause both TIPS and Treasury bonds to decline in market value, so why buy only bonds?

INTEREST RATE DILEMMA

Most folks seem to think that on some Wednesday or Thursday morning, they'll wake up to discover that interest rates are 2 percent higher than they were the day before. Well, it doesn't work that way, Clyde. Folks who gain weight don't suddenly waken and find themselves 33 pounds heavier than they were the night before.

Interest rates have been increasing for months, and historically, when interest rates rise, the rise is slow and so gradual that you don't notice the change until it's significant to

you – and then it's too late

Still, 30-year TIPS are preferable to 30-year Treasury bonds, though either purchase raises idiocy to a new level if one believes that interest rates are headed prominently higher in the coming few years. Higher rates will cause both TIPS and Treasury bonds to decline in market value, so why buy only bonds?

RECOMMENDED BLUE CHIPS

I suggest that you invest only \$20,000 in TIPS and then invest the second \$20,000 in Realty Income, AT&T, Kinder Morgan Energy Partners, GlaxoSmithKline, Royal Dutch Shell or a combination of other blue chip and pale blue chips. Those stocks, yielding more than 4.5 percent, have paid dividends for more than 30 years and increased them frequently.

And I'm comfortable wagering this second \$20,000 to a road apple that they will be worth significantly more in 30 years than your TIPS and triple their dividend incomes. And if they don't, then those Washington-guaranteed TIPS won't be worth bupkis anyway. This advice is mine, but the choice is yours.

Florida-based Malcolm Berko regularly dispenses financial advice. You may address questions to him at P.O. Box 8303, Largo, FL 33775 or by email at mjberko@yahoo.com. Creators Syndicate Inc.